

# VCS Summit 18<sup>th</sup> June Kings Centre Feedback Report

## Introduction

The purpose of the VCS Summit was two fold:

- to disseminate recent information about the Third Sector in Calderdale
- enable partners across public and third sector organisations to explore ways to work together better.

The format of the day included:

- Calderdale Community Forum's Annual General meeting
- VCS Market Place
- Presentations on Calderdale's Third Sector survey results and Blackburn with Darwen's approach to working with the Third Sector
- Workshops that focused on key aspects of Third Sector business
- Workshops that looked at the LSP themes and their engagement with the Third Sector

## Purpose of this report

The purpose of this short report is to share the feedback from the workshops (see Appendix 1 & 2) and to highlight some key common issues identified across the workshops. The names, organisations and contact details (where known) for those who attended are listed at the back of this report in Appendix 3.

## Workshop 1

There were 4 workshops that looked at issues for the VCS and focused on:

- Capacity building
- Commissioning
- Voice & Representation
- Funding of smaller groups

Some key issues emerged from across the workshops:

- The need to improve internal communication within the Third Sector and external communication with public/private sector.
- Capacity needs to be built within Third Sector including staff training/development
- Third Sector IT infrastructure and communication channels needs to be improved
- A commitment to sustainable funding rather than short term, time limited funding
- Greater recognition of the value of Third Sector (in real terms)
- A 'bidding' support/training package for use by the Third Sector
- Better understanding and engagement between Third Sector and other partners
- Wider/alternative methods of public consultation

## **Workshop 2**

Looking at the themes within the LSP, these workshops highlighted some key areas of opportunity:

- Partners to offer training opportunities to Third Sector staff at low/no cost
- Partners to actively support and promote volunteering opportunities for staff within their organisations
- More enterprise hubs
- Private Sector Third Sector Champions
- Recognising the wider value of social enterprises
- Cascading IT equipment to Third Sector groups
- Todmorden – pilot for integrated working (VCS inclusive & in development)
- Asset Management – training/list of potential buildings/land
- Joint commissioning opportunities
- Cross partnership non-hierarchical mentoring and shadowing opportunities
- VCS ‘show – casing’ opportunities aimed at partnerships
- Partnerships to pro-actively seek Third Sector engagement and dialogue

## **Next steps**

It is anticipated that this feedback will help to formulate a Third Sector Strategy in Calderdale and provide all partners with ideas and suggestions that can be taken forward as part of that strategy.

If you require any more information or wish your contact details to be added to Appendix 3 please contact or email Kay Hobson 01422 393128 [kay.hobson@calderdale.gov.uk](mailto:kay.hobson@calderdale.gov.uk)

## Workshop Feedback - Capacity building

### Where are we now?

Frustration felt by small organisations due to lack of capacity, need

- Staff development and training
- Management/committee/financial skills
- Paid time
- IT/email provision, infra structure and training
- IT equipment from statutory partners – is it passed to VCS?
- Need more trustees but there are concerns about responsibility and a lack of awareness of what's involved.
- YCAS offers limited training
- 'Fit for Funding' – demand is outstripping supply
- Need more research within sector
- Difficult to recruit volunteers to be involved in college/university
- Not enough time to skill up
- Not enough funding
- 53% have no paid staff – is this an issue – does the sector want to grow its paid capacity or is it doing things the way it wants to?
- Partnership project (between VAC/NHS Calderdale0) helps develop commissioning skills
- Grants for Health Scheme – joint project between VAC, CFFC, NHS Calderdale

### In 5 years time

- Services that reflect the sector/community need
- Proactive 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector provision – personalised services
- Equal footing with public sector
- Use joint funding bids
- Good quality supply of trustees- ongoing support and training
- Greater collaboration between VCS & other sectors regarding resources, funding & training
- More opportunities to team up with private sector - Forward 4 Business, Compact, time for staff to volunteer
- CVS – need greater capacity – Research Officer?
- Need to 'celebrate' more regularly
- Partnership project (between VAC/NHS Calderdale0) helps develop commissioning skills
- Mentoring – projects set up to work across sectors and shadow
- Build up groups already in the sector – allow value, independence and support

## **Workshop Feedback - Commissioning**

### **Where are we now?**

- PCT commissioning process this year – no information back -so far not positive
- Unfair timescale demands
- (Lack of?) )Awareness of VCS culture /capacity
- Not 'real' commissioning at present
- Not an efficient system
- Question about how we can deliver services alone or with partners
- Organisations don't know where to get information from e.g. commissioning jargon, need information centre
- Are groups 'commissioning ready'?
- Information overload from infrastructure support (capacity)
- Alienation by language and jargon used by statutory and VCS infra structure organisations
- Pressure to keep aware – but not structure – anxiety
- Confusion over FCR
- Local examples of when the value of local VCS not written into specification
- Assumptions made about what may or may not be relevant for VCS commissioning
- Small groups losing out
- Need for grants alongside commissioning
- Some VCS always grant reliant
- Expectation that VCS is the cheaper option?
- Do commissioners understand added value?
- Jargon and complexity used as a smokescreen?

### **In 5 years time**

- Job share /contract share
- How do we find partners
- Commissioners acknowledgement
- Requirements to allow 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector organisations to deliver
- Learning process – needs to be getting better
- Local website/page for all local funding opportunities, something like SCMS
- Standard local PQQ
- Standardised local processes
- More standardisation – service bids can then be shorter
- Consultation with VCS about services we may know more about than the commissioners themselves.
- Quality not quantity
- Extended benefit of 'local'
- VCS are specialists in our own fields but are not a7 do not want to be specialist bid writers – need a funded resource that can be shared by the sector
- CF external funding units
- 'Community Commissioning Coordinated'
- Clear definition of commissioning - included or not procurement
- Influencing commissioning process before procurement
- Tokenism will be eliminated
- Social clauses in the tender
- Every thing will be on offer to the sector – not excluded on assumption
- Do not underestimate the threat of larger nationals
- Claims of these of local partners not always true

- Time for things to be done differently
- Think things through again - commissioning
- A clear shared language
- Overcoming barriers, i.e. thresholds of £30K - can't become a provider
- Service delivery in VCS may not be a match to statutory specifications – need innovation & flexibility
- Need to develop a greater understanding of statutory organisation with the sector
- Business case – should understand, explore differences
- VCS being involved at the beginning of a process and not when decisions are made
- Shared process that's planned regarding opportunities to provide services

## **Workshop Feedback - Voice and Representation**

### **Where are we now?**

- Moving in the right direction
- Where there are network officers the representation is much stronger
- Themes that are without network support are struggling
- Small VCS groups need clarity about representational structure & what are the roles of representatives
- Being a VCS representative for such a diverse sector is difficult
  - Difficult & very hard to convey the messages and communications from reps back to groups
- Is representation built into bids?
- Limited capacity for VCS to represent the sector
- Not currently including representational time into funding bids
- Limited groups are able to offer backfill monies

### **Where do we want to be?**

- Money to be made available to VCS for representation through 'Reward & Recognition'
- Groups to include representation in funding bids
- Public engagement development
- Backfilling capacity rather than financially – senior staff coming out of VCS group to attend statutory meetings/strategy groups. How to ensure that the backfill is beneficial rather than tokenistic
- Creating alternative methods of involvement for representation
- VCS representatives being and feeling valued
- Create a system that works on the terms of the people that are being engaged
- A level playing field
- Agenda setting with VCS groups. Statutory partners meeting with groups prior to meetings to get key feedback from VCS
- Consider alternative consultation, engagement with VCS groups – innovative ideas
- Engagement worker to support VCS representation across thematic strands
- Locality model to be developed to look at neighbourhood management and involvement
- Long term strategies that have potential to develop strength, continuity and confidence for VCS groups
- Workforce development to ensure VCS involvement and working together is part of people's job roles within statutory sector
- Clear communication of mutual barriers to partnership working & Compact compliance back to central government
- Clarity and common language between partners
- Clear, transparent and timely communication between partners
- Adequate funding for representation through service level agreements, increasing capacity, funding innovative representation.
- More involvement in the transformation that will happen with 'Putting People First' – impact on VCS? – great opportunity
- 'Big Conversation' as a joint annual event in Calderdale to support greater understanding of local and national initiatives /policies – needs to be part of a greater communication strategy
- The Compact needs to include a section on 'Communication/ & /information'
- Accountability has to be 2-way, transparent and based on shared principles
- Recognise community forum is the sectors choice of representation, communication and dialogue

## **Workshop Feedback - Funding of smaller groups**

### **Where are we?**

#### Funding and problems

- Recognition
- Ongoing funding & running costs
- Time taken to complete forms
- Length of time for decision
- Sustainability
- Major developments
- Issues when PCT, CHBC & other partners are not joined up in their approach to VCS
- Is CCF the choice of 'voice' or is it LINK?

#### Solutions

- More members
- Multi-year funding
- Publicity
- Quality standards
- Clear mission & objectives linked to delivery & demonstrating outcomes
- Maintaining dialogue

#### **In five years time**

- Wider delivery across Calderdale
- IT supported 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector
- Equipment & hardware refurbished
- Wider membership & new members
- Calderdale wide delivery
- Sharing concept
- Recognised for a much needed service & by health professionals
- Own premises
- Diversifying
- Continuity of funding multi year
- Recognition and value
- Growing and diversifying
- Advice and support needed to help develop consortiums
- Small groups spend a lot of time on bids – can't always afford the time
- Larger bids – barrier by not having enough funds to pursue
- Small groups need time to deliver – growing and developing bids is difficult
- No win!, No fee! Arrangement – VAC support
- Funding resource to be built into VCS
- More innovation on pilots (based on current VAC model)
- More support/resource for quality standards
- Foresee impacts and work together to look at solutions

### Workshop Feedback - Economy and Enterprise

- VCS could take advantage of volunteer/placements from Higher Education
- VCS could be providing information about learning/FE/HE to disadvantaged groups and 1<sup>st</sup> rung learning.
- Learning for health & well being leading to skills development and employment
- Where is the funding for specific projects - this requires 2 way dialogue & action for joint bidding
- LAA – needs partnership & understanding of priorities for each sector e.g. VCS individual needs versus public sector targets
- VCS have been required to meet targets for grants & funding (as does public sector)
- VCS making a profit – does this need a change in charity law
- EU regulations have made bidding & survival more difficult
- Need smarter working between organisations & sectors
- Enterprise requires creative thinking & sharing of expertise

### Recession and its effects

- VCS organisations to become self funded/earn income from services provided (cultural resistance?)
- Enterprise hubs - Calderdale Cares
- Champions in private sector to support VCS development/skills/ private sector benefits
- Communication systems between sectors
- Measures needed for strengthening the economy
- VCS needs to be moving away from grant systems & mindsets (already happening slowly?)
- Social enterprises have health benefits - reduce health costs to NHS/PCT- reduce benefits costs
- Be aware that large organisations taking contracts over via EU rules on open //transparent bids – knowledge needs sharing
- Requires risk acceptance & percentage of failure

### Summing up

- Mindsets need to change in all sectors
- Is there a national organisation that can lobby on behalf of VCS?
- Is there a local organisation to help develop social enterprise in Calderdale

## **Workshop Feedback - Environment**

### **Four key areas:**

- Cleaner, greener, safer communities
- Climate change – CO2 reductions
- Affordable Housing
- Transport – congestion/killed/seriously injured on roads

### **Issues**

- Awareness of and support for current work/projects
- Statutory sector having the awareness and willingness to engage/work with community and voluntary sector
- Commissioning rules that can prevent the development of services from CVS
- What scope is there for contracting with small local groups for e.g. cleaner, greener work?
- How a locality can be represented when views about a topic might be very different
- Examples of new housing development and windmills – and how views are balanced
- The role of the Local Development Framework – engaging with people in the right way at the right time.
- Raising understanding of the involvement opportunities – giving people the choice
- Use of community centres, area forums etc for this – ICT, local radio/TV, press – digital TV community notice board

### **Five years on**

- Development and expansion of new technologies: TV/internet as improved 2 way communications
- Better local democracy – referenda and decision-making that can be influenced locally and quickly
- Recognition of support for long term smaller groups so they can deliver environmentally friendly local services by (inclusion in assessment processes – clauses)

## **Workshop Feedback - Children & Young People**

### **Where are we now?**

- Legislative requirement of Children's Trusts to co-operate
- Inter-agency co-operative guidance 2008
- VCS is represented in the Trust (Third Sector rep holds Vice Chair)
- Third sector have the opportunity and support to showcase their work to the Trust and highlight their areas of need.
- Third Sector are invited to submit pro-forma's that show how they contribute to the Every Child Matters outcomes & LAA targets

### **In the future**

- Schools and GPs will be brought into the legislative requirement in the future
- Trust will look at a process for future collaboration with the CYP Joint Commissioning Group
- VCS representatives need to ensure that they communicate the needs of VCS groups
- Todmorden - proposed pilot for integrated working in practice and the volunteer role that the Community Forum will be supporting in Todmorden to identify as many children and young peoples' groups and link the to networks and partnerships along with other support available

## **Workshop Feedback - Stronger & Safer**

### **Stronger**

- Need to accelerate/move NI07 up the agenda
- Don't know the size of the voluntary sector - what are its needs?
- Over 1000 plus small clubs and sports organisations which are not currently 'captured' partnership
- Need to recognise the value of the VCS Transport – its assets and funding
- Asset transfer opportunities in progress – community use of land and properties

### **Safer**

- 3 blocks where VCS have a major delivery role – Brunswick Centre (Men's HIV/Aids support, Basement Project (Drugs) and Women's Services (Domestic violence)

### **Challenges**

- Commissioning – Community Forum being asked for advice for VCS generally – difficult to provide – need proper resourcing similar to what is in place with CYP and proportionate to need
- Communication – structures & information
- Area Forums and 'Working Local'
- Public & voluntary sector need to understand each other better (non-hierarchical shadowing/mentoring programme)
- Fewer people volunteer in Calderdale than elsewhere
- Support for Governors - need proper package
- The money is always somewhere else in the district (perception that it seems to be)
- Building neighbourliness
- Lack of funding for voluntary/community sector – what is the value of Street Angels?
- Funding/commissioning – how much goes to the voluntary/community sectors from the Safer and Stronger budget? Unlike many other areas Calderdale has little extra above base budget
- Voluntary and Community Sector have more impact in communities regarding quality of life – need to understand who does what well
- What does the Safer and Stronger Partnership want from local voluntary /community partners?
- Community/Voluntary sector can help Safer and Stronger Partnership to identify what's needed & how they can help each other to develop

### **Good working – what will it look like?**

- Current activity is often invisible to those outside the know (does it need to be more visible?)
- Safer Stronger Newsletter – exchange of/update information – opportunities to share
- 'Street family' – PCSO's, Neighbourhood Wardens, Street Angels, Ambassadors
- Community spirit in evidence
- Communities will feel looked after
- Full Council will take place elsewhere in the district

## **Workshop Feedback - Older People**

### **Where are we now?**

- Local and national politics get in the way
- Need better communication systems
- Not engaged with enough groups
- Older people are often isolated and hard to reach
- No passion for older people
- Lack of information & communication (not just older people)
- Lack of broader consultation and involvement
- Not a local priority (Government directives make things happen)

### **In the future**

- Use older people's skills and experience
- Capacity building – more of a well-being centre for all ages
- More Older People's voices
- More Older People involvement
- More provision of transport for Older People
- Need to raise awareness of the new generation of older people
- Supporting services to grow in rural communities
- Enough variety of services for people
- Empower local communities
- Encourage more funding focussed in rural communities and retain local services such as Post Offices
- Better understanding of the Voluntary Sector
- Organise a VCS 'Show case' about what the VCS can do
- Inter-organisational secondments
- Older People's Partnership

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